



Bunyan Meeting

News Letter/15

SUNDAY 26 JULY 2020

Dear friends

Several people have responded to the question in last week's News Letter to say whether or not they think that they would attend services at Mill Street should we open our doors in September. If you have not responded please could you let the church office know. Having some idea of the numbers who may initially attend services will help us with our planning.

We have begun to look at some of the practicalities of reopening the church in a way that conforms with government guidance but there is still much work to do. So far, we have worked out that we can accommodate thirty five people downstairs and up to forty around the gallery, but if we follow our service on the television screen (the use of books and papers is not advised), many upstairs will be unable to see! We are investigating the possibility of a drop down screen in front of the organ, but without this, many seated upstairs will not be able to fully participate in the service.

Attendance at local churches which have already opened has often been small, as many people are still rightly cautious about leaving home for non essential reasons. We don't want anyone to feel under pressure to attend services at Bunyan if we open, and everyone must do what they feel is best for themselves.

We cannot hold our usual Manse Garden Party this year, but if anyone would like to meet with other members of the congregation in the manse garden, we could perhaps arrange a small gathering of up to ten people over a few afternoons in August. Please let me know if you would be interested in coming to this.

Please keep sending your articles for our News Letter direct to me at chrisdamp@mac.com or by post to the church office for my attention.

Your friend and Minister

Chris

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4 v 4 - 7



Chat, Coffee and Croissants

A number of us gathered for a zoom chat over coffee last Sunday, at the time when we would normally have had coffee following our Christ, Coffee and Croissants service. We hope to meet again on the third Sunday in August.

My Path to Leading Worship

Back in the 1970 when I became involved with Bunyan Meeting as well as the “Mother Church in Mill Street” there were branch churches at Kempston, Elstow, Goldington and Stagsden and living in Kempston that was the branch I attended.

Our services, (we had one in the morning and one in the evening) were mostly taken by visiting lay preachers although some were in the hands of an Assistant Minister and occasionally the Minister. Filling the pulpit every Sunday was not an easy task because many of the lay preachers were on the Methodist Circuit so they were only available when they had a free Sunday. In Kempston the task of pulpit supply was in the hands of a lady called Beryl Davies who did a very good job but struggled when holiday times came around. Some of us were together at a House Group at the start of the holiday season when at the end of the meeting, over a cup of tea/coffee, Beryl announced that she could not fill a particular Sunday, I think evening. She enquired if anyone knew of somebody she could contact. A silence followed her question as those of us there

thought deeply about the situation but failed to come up with any names that she had not already contacted. At that moment, I am still not sure what happened, but I could hear myself saying “I will do it!” much to the amazement of those there and in particular myself as I had never done anything similar in the past and to be honest had never ever thought about it. Beryl thanked me and my name was on her list. When I returned home that night my only thought was “what have I done, why did I say I would?”, but the deed was indeed done and there was no going back. I can remember the passage of scripture that I chose which was John ch.14 v. 6 “I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me”, but as for the hymns or what I actually said I have no idea only that after people were very kind in the comments made and I was asked to take further services.



The news that I had taken the service spread through the other branch churches and to prove how desperate they were I received invitations from all of them and on each occasion was invited back. Sadly as the years went by, with the exception of Elstow who were given the chance to become an independent church, the other branches were closed and on each occasion I had a date in my diary to lead worship but I do not think, or hope that, my planned visit had anything to with the closure!

I continued to receive invitations from Elstow and still do and then a few years ago at the annual picnic at Roxton during a general conversation Joyce and Bernard Hooker became aware that I visited Elstow and I was asked if I would consider going to Roxton which I did and again still do. Shillington Congregational Church also found out, I think through Elstow, and again I was asked if I would go there and I did and still do.

When I cast my mind back to that night in Kempston when I found myself saying yes and then remember my visits to Stagsden, Goldington and latterly to Elstow, Roxton and Shillington I have no doubt that on each occasion I have not been alone. Jesus promised that where only two or three are gathered He will be there and I am sure that during my preparation and during the actual act of worship He is there.

Allan Linger.

From the Church Office

Whilst the Office is quieter Sue is making sure the Database is up-to-date. Over the next week she will be checking the emergency contact details. For those on email please could you let the Office know the **family member/friend who you would wish to be contacted in an emergency**. For those not on email, please write to the Office with the information (you could send a note via your Bunyan 'Postie!'). We need to know the following:

Your name:

In case of an emergency please contact:

Name

(Relationship to you e.g. son, friend)

Phone *Landline*: *Mob*:

Address of Contact

Thanks

And an especial thanks to Margaret Richardson who during the past few weeks has gone through the files at home and ordered them.

Sue

Rita Long

Denise and I would like to thank the Church for the flowers brought to us by Alison Lipsett following the recent passing of Denise's Mum.



Many of you may remember Rita Long from when she attended both the Nine Lessons and Carols with us and also for running a stall at the Christmas Bazaar for a number of years, selling the crocheted items she had made. These were very popular and over many years she raised a great deal of money for the Primrose Unit at Bedford Hospital.

Rita was well known also for fostering a large number of children over the years and she was recognised in Woburn Sands for her charity work by being given the honour of switching on the Christmas Lights a few years ago. She was visited by the Chaplain of Milton Keynes Hospital on the ward and given a small olive wood cross which gave her great comfort and which she held onto until the very end of her life. As a result of this Denise has bought some of the crosses for Chris to give to those in need. Rita will be sorely missed by us and all her grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Many thanks - any questions please give me a call

All the best

Warwick and Denise

Finance Situation

You will have read in previous News Letters that cash/cheques have been sent to the church office mainly in respect of freewill offering so I thought the time was right to give an update on the current situation. When the lockdown started the church bank account details were circulated and you were encouraged, if possible, to set up a

standing order with your bank and I am happy to say that 16 people have so far taken this route which has resulted in weekly average giving rising from £380 per week to £690 per week and there have also been cash/cheques sent to the office for banking totalling £3,785. Claims have been made using the government furlough scheme which up to the end of June total £9,230 of which £1,760 is in respect of the museum curator, Nicola, with the rest being for our caretakers/cleaners (Jo & Raj)

At the time of writing this I am preparing the claim for July which will be for £2,000 in respect of Jo & Raj plus £1,200 for Nicola. The furlough scheme is gradually being withdrawn and the latest date given is the end of October. I will submit claims for as long as is allowed but hopefully by then we will have the staff back at work if only on a part time bases. The Chancellor also announced a while ago that there would be £1,000 for each furloughed employee re-employed payable in January 2021 so with that in mind we should get a further £3,000 early next year.

Also at the start of each tax year we receive an allowance of £3,000 from the government in respect of “Employers National Insurance Contributions” which is always a help and even more so this year. At the moment the bank balance is such that I have not had to call on the Trust for help but the fact is that income is being lost due to the closure of the coffee shop/Wednesday lunches and the room lettings but at the moment we are saving on electricity/gas charges. If the current situation continues into the winter then the gas cost in particular will increase because we will have to have some heat in the premises for conservation purposes.

Returning to the question of standing orders, if you have not done so and wish to follow that path then the bank details you will require to set one up with your bank/building society are as follows;

Sort Code: **08-90-28**

Account Number: **65013663**

If you need the account name it is “**Bunyan Meeting Free Church**”

Allan Linger

Church Treasurer

Audrey Mehew writes:

Thank you for the News Letter and the service for yesterday. As usual the service was so uplifting. It is appreciated. I did not realise it would have been the River Festival this last weekend and enjoyed the reflections by Tom Barwood.

I found my life in Bedford was very similar to Tom’s with regard to enjoying the river so much. Every Sunday evening after the service at the Baptist Church in Mill Street my mother took me for a walk along the Embankment and my grandmother lived at Cardington so every week we cycled over the river bridge to visit her and take her shopping.

At 11 years old I went to Dame Alice Harpur School and again on my bicycle went over the town bridge to school. I always watched the rowers not realising that my future husband was taking part! Bill’s family lived near to Tom’s in Russell Avenue and as our house in Oakley was not ready when we sold our house in Bedford we lived for a few months with Bill’s family when Simon was three years old.

The park was opposite so each day I took Simon to the swings and then along by the river. Unfortunately the weather was not brilliant that summer but that did not deter

us. I remember it had been raining and we were coming back by the Boat houses when a van came along and the wheels threw filthy water all over me. Simon thought it was hilarious but I took a different view!

Audrey

Janet Barratt writes:

Sitting in my hospital bed I've just been following the Sunday Service Sheet which Gilly brought in for me. I found it so comforting and I sang the hymns (no-one complained, they were all asleep). Thank you to all those who prepare the services. You are bringing much comfort to a worried old lady. Please don't stop producing them.

Thank you too for all the prayers which have been said for me and my family, they are making such a difference. God bless you.

Janet



Helen Kennedy writes:

I thought you might be interested to see this photo of a **leucistic jackdaw** feeding one of his family. He/she is a regular visitor to our garden and Chris has been patiently waiting to get this shot. There are other babies as well as a Mum/Dad and they are all have the normal colouring.

Best wishes to all.

Helen.

The BMS Birthday Scheme

If you wish to support the BMS through their Birthday Scheme, please contact Margaret Ormerod. It's a great way to celebrate a birthday. Thank you for your support.



Last Friday, **Joy Ansell** celebrated her birthday and this week **Cherry Protheroe**, **our minister** and **Elma Plentie**, celebrate their birthday.

Members of the Scheme can make donations online at bmsworldmission.org quoting our church reference number which is 7. Or you can send your donation to Margaret Ormerod at 32, Wheathouse Close, Bedford. MK41 8JX. Or simply wait until we are back at church and hand it to me there.

Many thanks

Margaret

Poetry Corner

Remember this poem when you next meet an older person who you might brush aside without looking at the young soul within. We may all one day be there too.

I'll tell you who I am. ... As I sit here so still,
As I do at your bidding, ... as I eat at your will.
I'm a small child of Ten ... with a father and mother,
Brothers and sisters ... who love one another.

A young boy of Sixteen ... with wings on his feet.
Dreaming that soon now ... a lover he'll meet.
A groom soon at Twenty ... my heart gives a leap.
Remembering, the vows ... that I promised to keep.

At Twenty-Five, now ... I have young of my own.
Who need me to guide ... and a secure happy home.
A man of Thirty ... my young now grown fast,
Bound to each other ... with ties that should last.

At Forty, my young sons ... have grown and are gone,
But my woman's beside me ... to see I don't mourn.
At Fifty, once more, babies play 'round my knee,
Again, we know children ... my loved one and me.

Dark days are upon me ... my wife is now dead.
I look at the future ... shudder with dread.
For my young are all rearing ... young of their own.
And I think of the years ... and the love that I've known.

I'm now an old man ... and nature is cruel.
Tis jest to make old age ... look like a fool.
The body, it crumbles ... grace and vigour, depart.
There is now a stone ... where I once had a heart.

But inside this old carcass ... a young guy still dwells,
And now and again ... my battered heart swells.
I remember the joys ... I remember the pain.
And I'm loving and living ... life over again.

I think of the years, all too few ... gone too fast.
And accept the stark fact ... that nothing can last.
So open your eyes, people ... open and see.
Not a crabby old man ... Look closer ... see ME!!

Submitted by **Liz Jones**

Dilys Leeder writes:

Thank you to everyone involved in producing the weekly services from Bunyan Meeting during the 'Lockdown' period, those who take part, and those who design the pages so interestingly. They have been such a blessing. I love the News Letter which has been a joy to receive each week too, very interesting, helpful and funny. A big thank you to my 'postie', I really appreciate you giving of your time to deliver it.

It has been lovely reading about and remembering many of the folk no longer with us, and those that I do not see anymore.

As I am an evening person at Bunyan Meeting and have been since 1997, I thought I would share how I came to be at Bunyan.

I started going to the Kempston Branch Church as a new Christian in 1995 and was beginning to settle there. I was helped and nurtured by the very kindly small group there and my dear friend the Rev. Delia O'Halloran who was one of the assistant ministers at that time. Unfortunately the Kempston branch had to close and some of us transferred to Mill Street.

I became a member in 1997 along with Pearl Thomas, Olive Turpie, Stan Perry and Glan and Gwyneth Grey Jones. Beryl Vaughan (nee Morgan) stood beside me. It was a very moving and special day for me. I attended morning and evening for about two years and have loved being part of Bunyan Meeting.



I had previously attended services at the Elstow Branch Church along with my sister. This was a very small group at that time run by Lynn and Tim Harris. Some time later, Linda and Roy Prudden took over and I was invited to join the fellowship at Elstow.

It was easier for me to get to Elstow than Bedford on my bike from Kempston, so I began to get involved with church work and activities. I continued to attend Mill Street in the evenings and I still enjoy two quite different services every Sunday.

In 2005, Elstow Bunyan Christian Fellowship was born as a small group of us, who with God's help became an independent, Congregational church due to advice and guidance from Bunyan Meeting and the Congregational Federation, and so we began our work as a separate church.

There has been a lot of change and under the pastorate of Roy Prudden and then Brian Addington we are an active, though small church, and our buildings are used by several groups in the community of Elstow and the building is constantly being improved.

This year we had planned for major works to preserve the large 'Pilgrims Progress' window but we are unsure if this will go ahead still, due to the Covid - 19. We have been greatly blessed by God's guidance.

Of course, at the moment, like Bunyan Meeting, our doors are closed for worship until it is safe to re open. There is nothing like being together in God's house to praise and worship Him, but we know that we must be patient and sensible and as God dwells in our hearts, He knows our worship is just as sincere and meaningful even if for now we can't meet together. Thank you all for your love and care for me, the phone calls and being included in the weekly services has meant so much to me over the long period of 'Lockdown'.

God bless you all and keep you safe.

Dilys.

A Church fellowship needs to decide if they are Fishers of Men or keepers of an Aquarium.

The miracles were often not so much stories of what Jesus did, but symbols of what He can still do.

Submitted by **Ken Wells**

For Your Prayers

Please remember **Ruth Blake, Wendy Carter, Delia O'Halloran, Holly, Janet Barratt and Julie Hake.**



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